

MINUTES: Centerville Township Windmill Ordinance Committee, August 24, 2006

Present: Mark Zemanek, Molly Hyde, Carolyn Weed, Travis Nelson, Gary Cook, Dale Pleva, Richard Kobetz, David Wurm

Absent: Joseph Czerniak, Richard Light

The committee began preliminary discussions on environmental issues. Steve Yancho, Chief of Natural Resources of the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, attended tonight's meeting. The committee advised Mr. Yancho that we were considering using a 2500' setback from the National Park and environmental areas. Did he believe that this setback was adequate and did the park have any zones of influence? He stated that the NPS does try to become involved when there is a potential affect to the park that affects the view shed from wilderness areas or affects migratory waterfowl or bats. Ms. Weed stated that there is research that suggests that wind farms can affect the already declining populations of bats, especially during migration times or foggy nights. It is unknown what attracts the bats. Mr. Pleva said that bats might be attracted by the whooshing noise of the blade, as they have been known to run into cane poles near a light.

Mr. Kobetz wondered if the NPS has any jurisdiction over Centerville Township and it's zoning. Mr. Yancho said the park service could make recommendations but ultimately any decisions would be up to the township zoning. In the summer, 50% of the piping plover population stays on the shoreline here. It is unknown whether or not there is a potential threat to their tracking system. Because the population is so small it is unknown whether or not it uses a standard migration path. Ms. Weed mentioned that according to Bill Scharf, a retired ornithologist from NMC who has conducted studies on birds and towers, Leelanau County is a "funnel" for migrating songbirds. She wondered what resources might be available to Centerville Township? Mr. Yancho said that that the NPS also has funding restrictions. There is a funding cycle for requests. Currently they are already planning requests for 2009-10. They are only one of 400 park units requesting placement within that cycle. Typically it is the same for the fish and wildlife service. A computer analysis may be necessary to determine visual intrusion to the park, including to the islands. The islands are important migration flyways for over 220 species. Ms. Weed reported that according to Mr. Scharf, it has been found that predators have learned behavior to hang out near commercial towers (not necessarily wind turbines) and grab dead birds and bats, which can affect studies. Mr. Alberts, from Lawrence Tech had previously mention to Ms. Weed that it seems that bats can orient themselves around wind turbines if the revolutions/minute are low enough. Certain weather conditions however, (especially quieter, foggy conditions – lower wind) but still at full power, turbines seem to have a higher bat kill than when there are high wind conditions. Mr. Pleva estimated that possibly ½ of the cherry farmers pay for the use of bees to pollinate. The other ½ rely on natural bees and bats (the next biggest pollinator next to bees). Bats do not rebuild their population easily. It was also stated that some projects have had to change location due to duck kills. It is unknown whether this is a factor for us.

Maintaining our rural character is consistent with the NPS. Computerized mapping is available, but the park service would need to know where towers would be placed. We would not know that until an application came in, however we could pick a mean elevation from S. French Rd to Amore. It was pointed out that Grand Traverse Resort can be viewed from M-72 before going down the hill. That is approximately ½ the height of a large WTG. The original estimate was for 50-60 1.5mw turbines, now it is guessed that perhaps 30 3mw turbines are a possibility. At least 10-15 or 20 turbines might be necessary to make a project profitable, and they would need to be in fairly close proximity to each other. Mr. Kobetz pointed out that all of the setbacks we had been discussing were in the 1500-2500' range. There was no input from the NPS for the existing county tower. The Fish and Wildlife Service does have an appendix for towers. They have comprehensive regulations stating their point of view based on the migratory act, eagles, and the endangered species act. No wind companies have ever been prosecuted for violations, however mitigation has been encouraged. It is better to choose the proper location from the start. Compensation has been made by creating habitat to compensate for destroyed habitat. Mr. Yanch stated that it is very involved to determine how the NPS should be involved. Most cases have been in offshore projects. It is still up to the local zoning to regulate. There are concerns that the park has that can be shared with the township. The area parallel to M-22 has been designated by congress to be managed as a wilderness area. This is essentially from 651 and 22 south. The committee will draft a letter requesting computer mapping of the view shed visual impact to the NPS. The Michigan DNR should have an eagle nest survey map.

We will start working on the basics of a draft ordinance at the next meeting, September 11. We will look at the Wisconsin Model Ordinance.

Respectfully submitted,
Molly Hyde